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SPEECH

OF

HON. J. B. CLAY, OF KENTUCKY,

ON

OUR FOREIGN POLICY.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

FEBRUARY 7, 1859.



WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY LEMUEL TOWERS.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THURSDAY, J. 1880

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY J. B. CLAY, JR.

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DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 7, 1859.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—
Mr. CLAY said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I have sought the floor, sir, for the purpose of giving expression to views I entertain upon some branches of the foreign policy of this country. It will be my endeavor, clearly and plainly, to make known my opinions; and that I may do so, I propose to state, in the beginning, the matters I intend to discuss.

There are three questions which have, of late, more than any other connected with our foreign affairs, occupied the public attention; they are intimately connected in principle, and full of importance to the destiny of the nation.

First.—England, Central America, and the Clayton-Bulwer treaty.

Second.—The slave-trade and our engagements to Great Britain for its suppression.

Third.—The acquisition, in any manner, of the Island of Cuba.

Sir, for a full understanding of England's connection with Central America and the subject of the treaty called the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, it is necessary to go back to a period anterior to the foundation of this Government; and, although I cannot expect to bring forward any historical facts which have not heretofore been brought to the attention of Congress and the country, I shall make a rapid resumé of such prominent matters of history as I think necessary to the elucidation of my views, believing that, however much attention may ever before have been given to them, there was no time when they presented themselves in an attitude so imposing and full of importance as now.

Omitting all the incidents of Spanish conquest so graphically detailed, and so beautifully wrought up by the genius of the venerable Prescott, whose death I have noticed with great regret, I shall go no further back than the time when Spain, being in full possession of the whole of Central America and the adjacent islands, allured by the rich cargoes and golden freights of the Spanish gallions, the buccaneers, the fillibusters, and the pirates of the countries of Europe, and especially of England, first began to gain a foothold upon the soil. For many of my facts I am indebted to the writings of an English clergyman, whose work, I understand, his own country have sought to suppress, because it contains too much truth for the purposes of the British Government.

Among the islands of the Bay of Honduras is that of Ruatan. This island, with one or two others less important, was taken possession of in 1642 by a British pirate—in 1650, the pirate horde was expelled from it by Spanish forces. In 1740, British settlements had been formed on the Mosquito shore, and at that early period a connection with the Pacific had been conceived by means of the river San Juan and the the Lake of Nicaragua. In 1780 a formidable expedition was sent by the English to the river San Juan, in which the heroic Nelson commanded a ship, without any result. The river and town of Belize became the retreat of a lawless band of pirates, whose irregularities, murders, piracies, and atrocities of every kind, are said to have been perpetrated with barbarous indifference, because punishment was unknown. Thus the British settlements at Ruatan, on the Mosquito shore, and at Belize, first had their origin with a class of persons far worse than any fillibusters of the present day, British pirates of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

More than one hundred years ago, the constant conflicts between the British and the Spaniards, became the subject of contention between the two Governments. In 1763, a treaty was concluded, by which the subjects of Great Britain were permitted to cut and carry away logwood from the Bay of Honduras. Sixteen years after, in 1779, the logwood cutters were attacked by the Spaniards, dispersed, and many carried into captivity. In 1783, after the American war, a treaty was made between Great Britain and Spain, by which British subjects were again allowed to cut logwood in certain localities, well defined by boundaries, an article of which provided *that the stipulations therein should not be considered as derogating in any wise from the Spanish rights of sovereignty.* Other articles were afterwards added to this treaty, extending the limits set by it, and authorizing the cutting of other discriptions of woods, but forbidding the cultivation of

the soil, and always carefully guarding the Spanish rights of sovereignty. In 1798, the Spaniards having become jealous of the British settlements, sent an expedition against them, but were beaten off. In the meantime the British had more than once taken possession of the island of Ruatan, for which they were as often dislodged by the Spaniards. From the mere circumstance of having been able to maintain themselves in the possession of the rights granted by the Spaniards, the British now began to claim to hold by the right of conquest.

I deem it unnecessary to go over the period between 1800 and 1850, when the Clayton-Bulwer treaty was made between the United States and England—unnecessary to refer at length to the continued expansion of her pretended claims—the emancipation of the Central American States from Spanish rule; England's assumption of a protectorate on the Mosquito shore, with its incidents so disgraceful to an enlightened nation—the seizure of Greytown upon the veriest pretext, and the annexation of Tiger Island, notwithstanding its cession to the United States. These matters of recent date are, perhaps, familiar to the public mind. Suffice it that England's only title rests upon treaties with Spain, which gave her the right to cut various descriptions of woods within certain bounds, in which the Spanish rights of sovereignty were always expressly and emphatically reserved. The emancipation of the colonies of Spain gave no new right to England, all that she had was acquired directly through a class of her subjects who had effected their lodgement, not for the sake of colonizing and improving the condition of the country and people upon whom they trespassed, but under the pretext of cutting logwood for the purpose of robbery, murder, and piracy. A foothold once obtained by any means so ever, those who had been pirates by every law on earth were made to serve designs of British aggrandizement, and were transformed into loving British colonists and subjects.

Sir, let us glance over the map and see what territory in 1850 England claimed to hold or protect; *and in this connection I will say, that as distinguished from the actual sovereignty, I recognize no such thing as a protectorate.* On the northern shore of the Bay of Honduras, she possessed herself of about twenty thousand square miles—the Island of Ruatan, at least one hundred and fifty square miles—by a treaty with one of the contending parties in Yucatan, she extended the northern boundary of her Central American empire about three thousand six hundred square miles of additional territory—to this must be added her assumed Protectorate over the Mosquito shore—in all, including islands, a

sum total of more than eighty thousand square miles, or nearly one-third of all Central America. Was not this fillibustering with a vengeance and to a purpose? Yet what complaints have been made of American fillibusters? We have even seen an American ship visited in the very waters of San Juan upon the ingenious pretext that the negotiations of Sir William Gore Onseley should not be embarrassed by their operations; as though the existence of war in any shape had ever interfered with British diplomacy.

The inquiry naturally suggests itself, what could have been the cause that the United States stood silently by and witnessed this gradual acquisition of an empire, by Great Britain, at our very threshold. The answer is easy. First, the war of the revolution—then the war of 1812, terminated in 1815, from the effects of which long years were required for the country to recover. So much were we occupied, internally, that the silent, secret operations of Great Britain were almost unobserved. Yet the fathers of the Republic were not blind to its destiny.

On the 2d December, 1823, President Monroe sent to Congress his message containing the famous Monroe doctrine. It asserted—

“That the United States could not view any interposition by any European Power, for the purpose of oppressing or controlling in any other manner the destiny of the American governments who had declared and maintained their independence, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States.”

Establishing the principle as applicable to this continent, which ought thereafter to be insisted upon—

“That no European nation ought to be allowed to plant upon it new colonies.”

This principle was asserted in 1825 by Mr. Adams, in his message to the Senate on the subject of the purposes of the Congress at Panama, and by his Secretary of State in his then famous Panama instructions, of the following year, to its broadest extent, instructing the minister accredited to that Congress, to propose a joint declaration of all the American States to the same effect. In the same year, (1826,) Mr. Webster, in his great speech on the subject of the Panama mission, went as far as any one had ever gone before or since, to uphold and maintain the doctrine, at the same time mentioning that the declaration of the principle was hailed with unbounded applause by the British Parliament. Mr. Brougham declared—

“That no event had ever created greater joy, exultation, and gratitude among all the free men in Europe; that he felt pride in being connected by blood and language with the people of the United States; that the policy disclosed by the message became a great, a free, and independent nation; and that he

hoped his own country would be prevented by no mean pride or petty jealousy from following so noble and glorious an example."

This principle, thus promulged to the world, became a cherished part of the public law which was to govern the relations of this country with the nations of Europe.

By what strange infatuation Mr. Clayton was ever induced to make the treaty in 1850, known as the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, or how the Senate came to approve it, it is impossible to conceive. The father of his country had warned us to beware of entangling alliances. Surely this was one. Intending to put an end to British acquisitions in Central America, even according to our construction of it, it at the same time placed an obstacle insuperable, as long as it shall remain in force, to our own advance in that quarter. Meaning to apply the Monroe doctrine to Great Britain, it in reality applied it to us.

Important as was the aspect of the Central American question at that day, involving the most direct communication between the two great oceans, yet it did not appear to possess the vital interest it now does. Although we had acquired California, her population was small and her resources undeveloped; although gold was known to exist, the rich streams of the precious metals which have since been poured from her cornucopia into the laps of the older States had scarce begun to flow. Now, the shortest, the best and the most expeditious route over the Isthmus is absolutely indispensable to the very possession and well-being of our Pacific domain, and we would be justified by that great law of necessity which is at the foundation of and beyond all human laws, even to seize upon, if there were no other remedy, any portion of Central America that might be required to afford a safe, certain, and quick connection with the Pacific.

This treaty, condemned by the whole country, wherever an expression has been made—the Monroe doctrine in express terms made a part of the Cincinnati platform, and adopted as a fundamental principle of the party that elected him—President Buchanan, in the first message he sent to the Congress of the United States, expressed himself in the strongest terms in favor of abrogating. He thought it ought to have been done promptly, and long ago. He informed us, at the same time, that overtures had indeed been made by Great Britain, in a friendly spirit, for the purpose of adjusting the difficulty arising out of the different constructions put upon the treaty by the two countries, upon which result he was not prepared to express an opinion. *He did not inform us that the object of the overtures referred to was the absolute abrogation of the treaty.* The majority of the Committee on Foreign

Affairs of this House, entertaining the fullest confidence in the sincerity of the President, looking to the principle of Mr. Monroe's message, as the sense of the country, and his own opinion expressed in the most solemn manner, offered, early in the last session, a resolution, almost in the very language of the message, requesting the President to take such steps as might be in his judgment best calculated to effect a speedy abrogation of the treaty. It was not the design of the committee to interfere in any manner with the treaty-making power; but simply that this House should express its opinion sustaining and upholding that of the President. Some of those opposed to any action on the subject, urged that it would be transcending its proper sphere to express its opinion. I, for one, entirely deny any such doctrine. I utterly repudiate it. I believe one of the very purposes for which Representatives come here biennially, fresh from the people, is to give expression of the true sense of the country upon any and all subjects of public interest. Although the resolution has not yet been passed, the vote upon its engrossment conclusively showed the opinion of a majority of the Representatives of the people.

In his message of this session, the President informs us that the cloud which had hung over the purposes of one of the British Ministers has been raised. We are told that he has proceeded to Central America to negotiate a surrender of the claims of his country to her assumed sovereignty and protectorate in that region. Sir, whilst I am now, and expect to be until it is accomplished, as much in favor of the entire abrogation of a treaty which I regard as a disgrace to this country, as the assertion of the principle of the Monroe doctrine was regarded an honor and a glory even by British statesmen, yet I am not unwilling to await the result of the pending negotiations; confessing, however, an utter want of faith in any British diplomacy, which assumes to have for its object the abandonment of a claim to one foot of territory, and which I feel sure, will be justified by the event of that now being conducted by his excellency Sir William Gore Ouseley.

I come now, sir, to the second branch of my subject—the slave-trade, and our engagements to Great Britain for its suppression. I believe that with the slave-trade to any part of the continent, except to her own colonies, England has nothing whatever to do. It is my opinion that the course pursued by her on the subject is a direct interposition in the affairs of this continent which she has no right to make; and, moreover, that that portion of the treaty of Washington, ratified the 22d March, 1842, relative to the slave-trade, and binding us in engagements to Great Britain, constitutes an alliance in the

highest degree entangling. I refer to the 8th article of the treaty. It stipulates—

“That each of the nations shall prepare, equip, and maintain in service on the coast of Africa, a sufficient and adequate squadron or naval force of vessels, of suitable numbers and descriptions, to carry in all not less than eighty guns, to enforce separately and respectively, the laws, rights, and obligations of each of the two countries, for the suppression of the slave-trade; but the two Governments stipulating nevertheless to give such orders to the officers commanding their respective forces as shall enable them most effectually to act in concert and coöperation.”

The effect of this engagement has been and is, that whilst we do not desire the introduction of slaves from the coast of Africa into this country, and which it is believed has never been done, unless perhaps in the case now undergoing judicial investigation, our laws, declaring it to be piracy, we are forced under this article of the treaty to maintain at vast expense on the coast of Africa, a squadron equal to about one-seventh of our whole force in commission, at the imminent risk of life to our officers and men, to prevent the introduction of slaves into countries which perhaps desire to have them, and with whose internal policy we have nothing to do; thus, at the very time when the majority of the people of the United States have declared that this Government will not intervene upon the subject of slavery in our own territory; continuing a direct intervention thereupon in foreign countries. The worst consequences, consequences endangering the peace of the civilized world, have been the result of this entangling alliance. That our ships have been and are almost daily visited on the coast of Africa, by British cruisers, is a fact that can be easily established; and it was only last year, when our flag was repeatedly insulted within sound of cannon of our own shores, aroused the country to such a pitch that the nation was ready to spring to arms.

Whilst announcing myself opposed to the slave-trade for our own country, and willing to see proper laws passed for its prevention to our own shores, I confess that I am not opposed to it on the score of humanity, believing the condition of the negro-slaves in the United States to be far better and happier than is that of the African race in any other portion of the world. It is on account of the white race, and upon grounds of expediency, that I base my opposition to a re-opening of the slave-trade.

Does any one acquainted with the subject believe, that England really desires to suppress the trade? I certainly do not. It is true that under the influence of Wilberforce and others, she at one time adopted a policy which desolated some of the finest of the West India Islands—a policy which ever since its results have been fully developed; she has been

sedulously endeavoring to repair by the introduction of a new class of slaves, whose condition of slavery is far worse than that of those whom she emancipated, and such has now become the sentiment upon the subject in Europe, that even the eloquence of the Earl of Carlisle, who is now endeavoring to play the worn-out role of Wilberforce, cannot again excite the nation against its interests. I believe, sir, that it is now part of the policy of Great Britain, whilst appearing to desire to suppress the slave-trade, in reality that it shall continue. How does her cooly system, and her negro-apprentice system differ from the most unlimited slavery, except in the horrible feature which they assert, that when they have exhausted the energies of the man, they send him back to starve and die in the country from which they forced him. I assert my belief that she desires a continuance of the slave-trade, and for two purposes; to give employment and prize money to her seamen, and to obtain apprentices for her colonies. It is a fact not known to every one, that for every slave taken by a British cruiser she receives £5, or about twenty-four dollars, and a like sum for every ton the vessel measures. And what becomes of the miserable slave? Is he taken back to the country from which he came, as we send back to Africa those captured by our cruisers? Not at all! The slave ships are taken either to Sierra Leone or to St. Helena, and the slaves, often without even being landed, are re-shipped on board of British transports and sent to Demerara, Berbice, and her West India Islands, and apprenticed for a limited number of years. But the instances of their ever getting back to Africa are so rare as scarcely to form exceptions to the rule.

If Great Britain really wished to put a stop to the slave-trade, it is believed that she could easily accomplish it. The trade is now principally carried on from the river Congo, and from the near vicinity of her own possessions on the coast of Africa. Those who are best acquainted with the subject, assert that a few forts, block-houses at the mouth of that river, and in other localities where slaves are obtained, five hundred free blacks and a few white officers would effectually put a stop to it. But then her seamen would lose their prize money, and she her ten year apprentices, which cost her only twenty-five dollars a head. She would lose, too, a large part of that commerce which is beginning to be by no means inconsiderable to us, and which the conduct of her cruisers threaten to destroy. The files of the State Department are full of claims against her for indemnity for illegal seizures of vessels, upon the various pretexts of being engaged in the slave-trade.

Sir, it is fortunate for us that the eleventh article of the

same treaty of Washington places it in our power to put an end to the obligations of the eighth, whenever we may choose to do so. It provides that "the eighth article shall be in force five years from the date of the exchange of ratification of the treaty, and afterwards until one or other of the parties shall signify a wish to terminate it." I believe it is the true policy of this Government at once to give notice of such desire, because, as I have said, it is against a declared principle of the United States, and because, if we even wish to continue a police of the African coast on our own account, we can do so with a few steamers, at far less cost than with a naval force of eighty guns.

Mr. Chairman, it was with the highest satisfaction that I hailed that portion of the last annual message of the President, upon the subject of the acquisition of the Island of Cuba. I believe, sir, that there is no subject of our foreign relations whatever at all to compare with it, and it is somewhat remarkable that whilst the statesmen of this country have differed upon questions of the acquisition of all other portions of territory since the foundation of the Government, there has been but one opinion as to this. Florida, Louisiana, Texas, California, and New Mexico, all had their opponents; we were even willing to yield something of our claims upon our northwest boundary; but no one has for a moment doubted the vital necessity to us of the acquisition of Cuba; each day becoming more apparent.

Sir, it is not upon the ground which has been so eloquently adverted to by many gentlemen on this floor, the great wealth and extreme fertility of the Island, that I base my ardent desire that it shall be acquired by the United States. Arguments of that sort, addressed to cupidity, are, in my judgment, unworthy the consideration of a great nation. It is because Cuba has been placed by the Maker of all things in such a position upon the earth's surface as to make its possession by the United States a geographical and political necessity; and if she were a mere barren rock like Gibraltar, I would as earnestly desire its acquisition as now. Instead of referring to its commerce, and its resources, let us take but a single glance at our own, which this Island, by its position, in the event of difficulty with Spain, or with any country with which she is in close alliance, effectually commands.

Of all the regions of the earth, with its Anglo-Saxon race, its immense fertility, and its vast surface, the Valley of the Mississippi, if not to-day the most important in agricultural production, is destined soon to be beyond all comparison. With 1,000 miles from New Orleans to St. Louis, two-thirds of the distance, the finest cotton land on the

Globe. Above St. Louis, with 1,500 miles on each of the two rivers, the Missouri and the Mississippi, over which settlement and cultivation has extended, or is rapidly extending; 1,000 miles for the Ohio, which waters the very heart of the present agriculture of these States, to say nothing of the vast extent of the other rivers which flow into them; what an empire in this valley is exhibited to the world. I have no time to go into statistical statements—the importance of the subject is too vast for ordinary figures. The cotton interest alone, with its millions of bales, whose production has sprung up in a lifetime, has assumed such importance that the very life-blood of England depends upon it. Cotton is king, says a Senator from South Carolina. Whilst I am not willing to admit this dogma, yet, neither you nor I, sir, nor the world beside us, can close our eyes to the immense importance to the staple, morally, socially, and politically. When we add to cotton, sugar and grain, the animal products of this great valley, which pass either coastwise or to foreign countries through the mouth of the Mississippi; when we consider how they must all be increased and magnified even during our lives, should it please Providence to spare us to the ordinary term of human life, what a spectacle is presented to the forecast of the statesman!

In addition to the Valley of the Mississippi, Texas, one of the young daughters of the Republic, is already beginning to loom up as one of the richest of the States; Alabama, with her great resources, finding chiefly an outlet from her port of Mobile. These interests, whose territory circles one-half the Gulf, are but a part of the enumeration. All our commerce with our Pacific States, before you and I are dead, sir—most probably the commerce of the Indies—will pass through the Carribean sea. All this, sir, all, must pass within gun shot almost of the Island of Cuba. From the Florida capes to the island, and from the island to the nearest point of Yucatan, the distance is about the same, less than one hundred and thirty miles. All the commerce of the Gulf must pass between one or the other of these channels. A few small steamers of war, quietly brought together, and suddenly thrown across each channel, never out of sight of each other, could, in a time shorter than would be necessary to send a force to sweep them from the seas, produce such horror and destruction of our commerce from the Gulf alone, as even the wealth of the Island of Cuba could not reimburse. So well was the importance of the geographical position of Cuba understood by our older statesmen, that thirty odd years ago, in the celebrated Panama instructions, this language was used:

“No Power, not even Spain herself, has, in such a variety of forms, so deep an interest in its future fortunes as the United States.”

Mr. Webster was afraid to trust himself to speak upon the subject. Sir, times have changed. In 1826 we were a weak country; our population was less than twelve millions. If our statesmen at that day had the courage to hold the language they did, how ought we to speak now, with near thirty millions of people, every day increasing in a degree far beyond the laws of natural increase, and with power and resources which place us in the first rank of the nations of the earth? Sir, the march of our destiny is onward, shall we be untrue to our sires who gave the propulsion? Cuba is necessary to our well-being and to our continued prosperity. General Jackson is reported to have said, on some occasion, "that men made the constitutions of countries, but God made the geography." So men make what is called the law of nations, from the necessities of States, but God makes the geography which controls the necessity. We must have Cuba, from a necessity which the Maker of the world has created.

Our foreign policy has ever been weak and timid. England and France, the two great Powers of Europe, nearest to us, who have assumed the right to declare to the rest of the world what shall be the true construction of the law of nations, have never been restrained for an instant by its requirements in their purposes of aggrandizement. Look at India, the pages of whose story are blotted all over with blood. Who that reads the English language can ever forget the impeachment of Warren Hastings, conducted by the ablest minds England ever produced? What an array was there against him—Burke, and Fox, and Sheridan. Even the great Pitt, although Premier, abandoning him in the hour of his need. Notwithstanding his crimes, his breaches of every law against the weight of the most powerful prosecution ever brought to bear against mortal man, he was finally acquitted, upon the ground, that the services he had rendered to his country in the acquisition of vast treasure and of territory, were acts of necessity, justified on that ground and on that ground alone. From that time to the present, England has marched on steadily to the acquisition of whatever she desired in India, regardless of all law, and with accompaniments that cause the mind to shudder at their atrocity.

Has France done better? Look only at Algeria, to say nothing of the principles which governed the elder Napoleon in his ideas of universal conquest. Up to 1815, all the Powers of Europe, and even the United States, had assented to the exactions of the Dey in the form of tribute paid. In 1815, the Americans captured an Algerian Frigate, and compelled the Dey to renounce all exactions, and to pay an indemnity of \$60,000. In 1816, Algiers was bombarded by English and

Dutch ships, their fleet and arsenal destroyed ; a heavy sum was exacted, and the Dey compelled to sign a treaty by which the enslaving of Christians was abolished.

All this was just and right. How did France bear herself? This country of Algeria, was known in many parts, to be rich and beautiful ; the French became desirous to repair the dismemberment of their colonial possessions by reducing it to a province. In the language of the historian :

"They desired to rival, if not eclipse the splendor of England in the East. They needed new space upon which to plant their overflowing population. Already the speculator fancied himself in possession of the rich plain of the Metiaja, and the orange gardens of Koliah and Blidan."

She had been insulted time and again ; her subjects enslaved, compelled, with the other nations of Europe, to pay tribute. All this she bore, seeking sometimes, indeed, partial redress, until she thought it *necessary* to her to possess the country ; then a pretext was to be found. In 1827, European diplomacy, which had borne insult, slavery, tribute, easily found it, and a *casus belli*, perfectly legitimate, was discovered. One day an old, irascible, half civilized, half barbarous, Bay, gave way to a perhaps momentary exhibition of passion, and so far forgot the dignity of his three tails, and his safety, as to strike a French Consul across the face with a fly brush he held in his hand. Instantly the dog's of war were let loose, scenes were enacted such as would disgrace American savages ; on one occasion 500 or 600 Moors suffocated in the cavern of Dahra, with smoke applied by the French troops. France *la belle et la glorieux*, thus proceeded to avenge the wounded dignity of her Consul, and to acquire a province which she has ever since heed and now holds.

Sir, these are the nations to whom we are constantly referred for construction of that national law which is so much talked off. The true examples I have referred to, India and Algeria, both of modern times, show the principle of the law which governs them when their interest is at stake. No sooner is it proposed that we shall pursue their line of policy, and their construction, than instantly we are threatened with Anglo French alliances, and all the cannon of the allies are made to thunder in our ears. Sir, I have no language to express the contempt I feel for such arguments addressed to the American people. I desire to see no wrong done to Great Britain or to France ; it is their true interest, as it is ours, to maintain the most friendly relations. I would be the last person to desire recklessly to plunge this country into war with these two great nations. But we fear them not, nor any alliance they may make or have made, to stand in the path of

our prosperity. Alliance can be met by counter alliance; and France, our old ally, cannot forget the day when combinations against her, caused the Cossack to bivouac in the gardens of the Tuilleries.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to the practice of the great Powers of the old world upon this principle of necessity, I find high sanction for my position in the opinions of American statesmen. As long ago as 1810, in his speech on the line of the Perdido, Mr. Clay asserted the doctrine. I quote his language:

"I have no hesitation in saying, that if a parent country will not, or cannot, maintain its authority in a colony adjacent to us, and there exists in it a state of misrule and disorder menacing our peace; and if, moreover, such colony, by passing into the hands of any other Power would become dangerous to the integrity of the Union, and manifestly tend to the submission of our laws, we have a right, upon the eternal principles of self-preservation, to lay hold upon it."

Mr. Webster, in his great speech upon the Panama Mission, went still further directly in reference to Cuba. Said he.

"Who has estimated, or who can estimate the effect of any change which should place this Island in other hands, subject it to new rules of commercial-intercourse, or connect it with objects of a different and still more dangerous nature."

Upon the principle of necessity and self-preservation, he went a greater length than any other. He thought that we ought not to wait until the event came without declaring our sentiments upon subjects important to our rights and interests:

"If we have, said he, a subsequent right to complain, we have a previous right equally clear of protesting. *And if the evil be one which when it comes will allow us to apply a remedy, it is not only allowed to us but makes it our duty to apply pervention.*"

Sir, upon the principle of necessity and of self-preservation, which has so often governed the conduct of England and of France, and which has been asserted time and again by our own statesmen, if Cuba stands in the way of our continued advancement and prosperity, geographically placed in such a position as constantly to threaten the safety of our commerce; if, moreover, Spain has entered into alliances with European Powers, by which they guarantee a protectorate of the Island, inconsistent with our declared principles on the subject of Foreign intervention; I am free to express my opinion that it is not only our right, but our duty, to possess ourselves of it by any means in our power. But, sir, whilst I believe these conditions exist, and that they will every day become more apparent, I have no doubt as to the true policy of this Government to avoid conflict, if possible, and to acquire it peacefully if we can. I am therefore content, whilst I fear nothing can be accomplished in that mode, to wait until the Executive has ex-

hausted every effort of diplomacy for the acquisition of the Island, and shall give the bill reported to this House from the Committee on Foreign Affairs my cordial and hearty support.

Sir, expecting shortly to retire from the public service. I have desired, upon the last occasion on which I will probably ever address this body at any length, to place my opinion upon the important topics I have touched on, upon the records of the country. I congratulate myself that I have found an opportunity to do so.